What is a Noxious Weed?

As defined by the Washington State Noxious Weed Board these plants are non-native, highly destructive, invasive, competitive, and difficult to control or eliminate. These exotic species not only reduce crop yields and destroy native plant and animal habitat; they can damage recreational opportunities, clog waterways, lower land values, and poison or harm people and livestock.

Does the law require noxious weed control?

The laws and regulations regarding noxious weeds are stated in Chapter 17.10 of the Revised Code of Washington and 16-750 of the Washington Administrative Code. For Class B and designated Class C noxious weeds, control is defined as preventing these noxious weeds from going to seed or any other propagule dispersion. Weeds falling into the Class A designation require eradication.

Who is responsible for controlling noxious weeds?

The State noxious weed law holds all land owners, including state, county and city land owner/managers, responsible for controlling noxious weeds on their property. Federally owned lands are subject to the Federal Noxious Weed Act. Since many people are unfamiliar with noxious weeds and the weed laws, the State and County Weed Boards are available to provide information on identification and control options. Landowners can choose the control methods they feel are most appropriate for their property. When property owners fail to comply with RCW 17.10 the Snohomish County Noxious Weed Control Board may control noxious weeds or contract for their control at the expense of the property owner.

For More Information Contact

Your Local
Noxious Weed Control Board

Or

The Washington State
Noxious Weed Control Board
(360) 902-1901

Noxious Weeds on the Internet
http://www.nwcb.wa.gov

Original brochure from Snohomish County Weed Board

Tansy ragwort
Senecio jacobaea

Seedling/Rosette

Flower

Tansy Ragwort

Why control Tansy Ragwort?

Tansy ragwort is toxic, and can be lethal to cattle and horses, to a lesser extent, goats, but seldom sheep. Horses and cattle may die from consuming 3 to 7 percent of their body weight. Young animals are 2 to 3 times more susceptible to poisoning than mature animals. The toxic properties are also a threat to humans, as a possible contaminant to the human food chain. Herbal remedies, contaminated flour, milk, or honey are potential sources, with long-term consumption being a primary concern. All plant parts are toxic, with the highest amount of alkaloids in the flowers, followed by the leaves, roots, and stems. Tansy ragwort contains several alkaloids, which of themselves are not toxic. However, liver enzymes, during metabolism, break down these alkaloids and they are then considered to be toxic and potentially carcinogenic. Chronic, cumulative poisoning, and irreversible liver damage, including cirrhosis of the liver are the results of ragwort poisoning. These toxic properties remain in cut plants found in hay. The alkaloids also leach into the hay and toxicity is not affected by drying.

The Plant

Tansy ragwort came to Washington in contaminated hay and straw in the 1940's. Seeds may remain viable for up to 15 years with up to 150,000 seeds being produced per plant. Tansy ragwort is classified as a biennial herb. It can complete its life cycle as a winter annual and occasionally as a perennial, depending on environmental conditions. As a biennial, tansy ragwort spends the first year in the rosette stage. The size of the rosette may indicate the potential for flowering, with larger rosettes producing more flowers. The overall rosette has a ruffled appearance, due to deeply indented and blunt toothed lobes of the leaves. During the second year, one or several flowering stems bolt, with the overall plant being one to four feet high. The flower heads are in flat-topped clusters. Each flower head is composed of yellow, daisy-like flowers. Each flower head is a composite of many disc flowers surrounded by (usually) 13 ray flowers. A distinguishing characteristic is the 13 ‘petals’,. Tansy ragwort has a taproot, and often a large woody rootstock. Initial infestation is by seed.

How can Tansy Ragwort be controlled?

- **Prevention**
  - Get it before it is a problem
  - Treat small infestations before they go to seed
  - Work with: neighbors, home owner associations, private road associations, and restoration groups .
- **Mowing**

  Mowing is not recommended unless additional control methods are going to be applied. Mowed plants will send up multiple stems, produce seed at a shorter height, and continue to grow until it goes to seed. If the stem is cut or broken the plant can produce for three or more years, becoming a short-lived perennial.
- **Clipping and Pulling**

  First and second year rosettes, and seedlings are difficult to dig out and must be dug out completely, making sure to remove all root fragments. These plants will resprout from root fragments. Clipping and pulling mature plants is a viable alternative to chemical control. Clip and bag seed heads and pull the plants. Pulling works well on full size plants after flowers have set because root fragments from mature plants will not resprout. Breaking the plant off above the crown during pulling is not effective. Areas hand pulled must be monitored for new mature plants since maturity occurs over a time span of mid July to October.

  Bag clipped flowers and seedheads and dispose of in the garbage. Burning is not recommended for the flowers and seedheads due to the high potential of seeds blowing away before burning, or being carried up in the smoke column. Seeds not burned can leave a ring of tansy rosettes the next year. There are also many areas where outside burning is prohibited. Pulled plants must be removed from pastures containing animals. Tansy becomes more palatable as it wilts down.

- **Biological**

  Bio controls are effective over the long term, but will not completely control seedset. Once bio control is instituted other control methods need to be considered carefully so the insect population has a chance to increase. Contact your Noxious Weed Board for more information on bio-control.

  The following insects are used to control tansy ragwort:
  - Cinnabar moth
  - Ragwort seed fly
  - Tansy ragwort flea beetle

- **Herbicides**

Always read and understand the label of the herbicides you choose to use.

Applying a herbicide to rosettes, and second year plants before bolting (stem formation) Spring and/or fall is the most effective time to treat rosettes. Late spraying of mature plants will not stop seed production and mature plants having gone to seed are going to die anyway. There is not much point in spraying full size tansy plants once they have started to seed out. **Full size tansy needs to be clipped and pulled.** After clipping and pulling, the area needs to be marked for monitoring and spot sprayed for rosettes.

Tansy responds to 2,4-D in the rosette stage, and to a combination of 2,4-D and dicamba or 2,4-D plus trichlopyr after stem formation. These products are available under a variety of trade names from local agricultural chemical dealers or farm supply stores. These products are selective broad leaf herbicides that will not harm surrounding grasses. Roundup is also effective, but is not selective and will kill any vegetation that it contacts. Always use a surfactant to increase herbicide uptake and reduce herbicide use.

Plants wilting after herbicide application or left in the field after pulling will become more palatable to the animals. Animals need to be removed from the field for 4 to 6 weeks if the tansy is sprayed, and after pulling or mowing if plants are left in the field. Because, a sugar conversion takes place, the tansy becomes less bitter and animals will eat full size plants. The plants are no less toxic.